

OP-EDS

KENNEDY: FOR FREE OR NOT FOR FREE?

AUGUST 3, 2023 | JOEL SCHLOSBERG | 0 COMMENTS



Robert F. Kennedy Jr. (right), before he was the family outcast. Public domain.

“**RFK Jr., You’re No JFK**” proclaims John Turres in *The Wetumpka Herald* (August 1). Although “early on, Kennedy was getting a lot of attention and even support, because, well, he’s a Kennedy, and that’s what the family label gets,” Turres doubts that the halo effect will last as Democratic voters find out more about how Robert Francis Kennedy Jr. substantially differs from his uncle John Fitzgerald Kennedy — and, for that matter, Robert F. Kennedy *père*.

The “Kennedy for me” of JFK’s campaign **promised** to be “not so doggoned seasoned that he won’t try something new.” In the current decade, new (or even lightly used) tricks are viewed as a menace to the gerontocratic order. As Andy Page **noted** in a 2021 letter to *The Wall Street Journal*, few Democrats

would still join JFK in championing “the mobility and flow of risk capital from static to more dynamic situations.”

Even radical leftists chide the 69-year-old junior Kennedy’s lack of enthusiasm for reviving similarly senior-citizen-aged programs. *Current Affairs* magazine’s Lily Sánchez and Nathan J. Robinson [berate](#) RFK Jr. for substituting a “delusional faith in the free market” for a Green New Deal, Medicare for All, and “the general policies of social uplift that progressives support.”

Sánchez and Robinson consider RFK Jr.’s description of the economy as combining “a cushy socialism for the rich and this kind of brutal, merciless capitalism for the poor” a too-little-too-late “mimic[ry] of Bernie] Sanders’ language of class antagonism.” They should know better, since they are aware that such “language of the populist outsider” draws from Noam Chomsky — who has [traced](#) his own view that “the state is there to provide security and support to the interests of the privileged and powerful sectors in society while the rest of the population is left to experience the brutal reality of capitalism” back to Adam Smith. It was the precedent of “bourgeois economists” who shared Smith’s laissez-faire convictions that led Karl Marx to acknowledge in an 1852 letter that “I do not claim to have discovered either the existence of classes in modern society or the struggle between them.”

Sánchez and Robinson view “the profit motive of the pharmaceutical, health insurance, and other related industries” as the root of their dysfunction — when in fact it is their scrupulous restraint of trade that enables them to reap revenue while ill-serving the public. (RFK Jr.’s [claim](#) that “some corporations don’t want free markets ... they want profits” actually underestimates how antagonistic market competition is to corporate profit.) Rediscovering how class privilege springs from political power would do more to undermine it than dusting off FDR’s New Deal — or JFK’s New Frontier.

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PUBLICATION/CITATION HISTORY

1. [“Kennedy: For free or not for free?”](#) by Joel Schlosberg, *The Wilson, North Carolina Times*, August 3, 2023
2. [Kennedy: For free or not for free?”](#) by Joel Schlosberg, *The Enterprise* [Williamston, North Carolina], August 3, 2023
3. [Kennedy: For free or not for free?”](#) by Joel Schlosberg, *The Johnstonian News* [Smithfield, North Carolina], August 3, 2023
4. [Kennedy: For free or not for free?”](#) by Joel Schlosberg, *The Butner-Creedmoor News* [Creedmoor, North Carolina], August 3, 2023
5. [“Kennedy: For free or not for free?”](#) by Joel Schlosberg, *The Wake Weekly* [Wake Forest, North Carolina], August 3, 2023

6. "Kennedy: For free or not for free?" by Joel Schlosberg, *Mat-Su Valley Frontiersman* [Wasilla, Alaska], August 3, 2023
7. "Kennedy: For Free or Not For Free?" by Joel Schlosberg, Newton, Iowa *Daily News*, August 8, 2023
8. "Kennedy: For Free or Not For Free?" by Joel Schlosberg, *The News* [Kingstree, South Carolina], August 9, 2023